

**REMARKS**

Claims 1, 7 and 8 are amended and claims 9 and 10 are canceled herein. No new matter is presented. Accordingly, upon entry of the Amendment, claims 1, 7, 8 and 11-64 will be all of the claims pending in the application.

**I. Response to Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103**

Claims 1, 7-12, 29-40 and 57-64 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al or Rau et al.

Claims 18-28 and 46-56 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al or Rau et al as applied and further in view of Ryoke et al.

Claims 13-17 and 41-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Yamamoto et al or Rau et al and further in view of Sasaki et al.

Applicants respectfully submit that none of the references cited, whether taken alone or in combination, teach or suggest the presently claimed invention. Specifically, independent claims 1, 7 and 8 are amended herein to recite that the carboxylated acrylonitrile-butadiene rubber comprises a carboxyl group in an amount of  $2 \times 10^{-3}$  to  $5 \times 10^{-2}$  ephr or more, in terms of acid-equivalent weight, which is not taught or suggested in any of the cited references.

The present specification discloses that if the amount of carboxyl groups in the obtained polymer in terms of acid-equivalent weight is less than the recited range, the cross-linking density is almost the same in comparison with acrylonitrile-butadiene rubber and the tensile strength and abrasion resistance is hardly improved. If the amount of carboxyl groups in the obtained polymer in terms of acid-equivalent weight is more than the recited range, the cross-

linking density is too high and problems will occur with respect to various physical properties of the rubber material composition (spring hardness, tensile rupture elongation of scorching).

Thus, the carbonyl group content is a significant feature of the claimed invention with respect to independent claims 1, 7 and 8. None of the cited references teaches or suggests this element of the presently claimed invention. Dependent claims 11-64 are patentable for at least the same reasons.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

In view of the above, the presently claimed invention is not rendered obvious over the cited references. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

## **II. Conclusion**

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

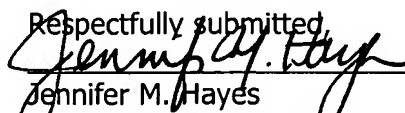
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